

Minutes of the
Edina Park Board
September 10, 2008
Edina City Hall, Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph Hulbert, Rob Presthus, Randy Meyer, Dan Peterson, Jeff Sorem, Ray O'Connell, Todd Fronek, Mike Damman, Ben Pobuda

MEMBERS ABSENT: George Klus, Howard Merriam

STAFF PRESENT: John Keprios, Janet Canton, Ed MacHolda

I. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 12, 2008 PARK BOARD MINUTES

Dan Peterson MOVED TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 12, 2008 PARK BOARD MINUTES. Ray O'Connell SECONDED THE MOTION. MINUTES APPROVED.

II. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Creek Valley Park Off-Leash Dog Area – Mr. Keprios gave a power point presentation on placing a proposed off-leash small dog park in the hockey rink at Creek Valley Park. He pointed out that he has received several requests from a variety of sources. He commented that he has heard from several people who have purchased a pass to use the Van Valkenburg off-leash dog area to which their experience has been their small dogs get endangered by the larger dogs. He stated that after doing some research it turns out that off-leash dog parks for small dogs are fairly popular across the nation.

Mr. Keprios indicated that the needs assessment survey validates that there is a need and desire for off-leash dog parks. He stated that 26% of the households indicated that there is a need for an off-leash dog park which equates to 5,480 households. Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that in 2001 they did a feasibility study where they hired a consultant which identified four different areas that met the criteria and should be considered for an off-leash dog park. The four areas were Braemar, Walnut Ridge, Creek Valley and Van Valkenburg.

Mr. Keprios explained that the proposal itself is to use the hockey rink as an off-leash dog area for small dogs weighing approximately 25 pounds or less. He added that the dog owners are required to pick up after their dogs just as they are required to do at Van Valkenburg. In addition, they must purchase the colored collar in order to be able to use the area. He stated that park users will still have to obey all of the other park rules and that no dangerous dogs are allowed in the off-leash area. The animal control officer will be in charge of the enforcement and the maintenance crew will be in charge of maintaining the area, however, that does not relieve the dog owners from having to pick up after their dogs.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that notices were sent to neighbors within 1,000 feet of the park on August 21st which ended up being 106 households. In addition, a press

release was published in the Edina Sun Current; e-mails were sent to all Edina neighborhood block captains as well as all board and commission members and elected officials.

Joy Bruder, 6405 Cherokee Trail, indicated that her house is the closest one to the park. She stated that there already is a problem with dog owners not picking up their dogs' feces. She commented that it is not only unpleasant but presents a health hazard. Ms. Bruder pointed out that her family is already exposed to a steady undercurrent of noise from Gleason Road to which a dog park would only exasperate the problem. She noted that she is also concerned that there is no way to enforce people to pick up after their dogs. She commented that many dog owners refuse to accept the responsibility for policing their pets and it's unlikely that allowing the dogs to run free will foster greater social responsibility. She noted that if anything it will encourage the owners to allow their pets to defecate at will and free their social accountability once the leash goes off the dog. In addition, she can't imagine how bad the smell will be coming from the garbage especially during the hot summer months. Ms. Bruder stated that she is also concerned that by putting an off-leash dog park so close to the homes that it will impact the property value of her home. She commented that she has mentioned this to several of her friends and they agree that they would not consider buying a house that's across the street from a dog park. Nobody wants to listen to everybody's dogs barking. Ms. Bruder commented that she already pays inflated taxes for the privilege of living in Edina and it's just intolerable for this to be combined with owning property that would have limited marketability. Ms. Bruder gave the Park Board a petition with 25 signatures of neighbors stating that they are opposed to this dog park.

Carol Korupp, 6200 Creek Valley Road, asked the Park Board if anyone has figured out just how far a dog bark can carry. She stated that as a dog owner she was surprised one day to hear just how far away a dog can be heard barking. She noted that she goes out with her dogs every morning so that they don't make any noise. She indicated that dogs can hear seven times better than humans and therefore is concerned that dogs will start barking because of territorial reasons. She stressed that she is concerned that they are going to create a bark zone where there was none and where conscientious neighbors try to keep their dogs quiet. Ms. Korupp stated that she thinks the Park Board had a great idea coming up with this proposal for a dog park; however, this is not the spot for it. She added that she would ask the Park Board to think twice about locating a dog park this close to houses and especially this close to a school.

Bart Foster, 6516 Cherokee Trail, stated that he is here to support the 25 neighbors who have signed the petition that Ms. Bruder presented. He noted that he is concerned that this will add a whole bunch of cars to this children's park. He indicated that this is a confined area and feels it will be difficult to keep clean as well as enforce a 25 pound limit. He commented that he also thinks it's too close to a school and children's playground. Therefore, he thinks it would be a mistake to use the hockey rink as an off-leash dog park.

Mr. Keprios pointed out that clean up has also been a very big concern at Van Valkenburg Park and that it is stressed to dog owners that this is a privilege by taking a piece of park land for a special interest use. If dog owners do not keep the area clean then the privilege will go away. He commented that they have been very good at keeping the park at Van Valkenburg clean. Mr. Keprios explained that the garbage is picked up every day as well as they have a doggie bag disposal that gets replenished.

Mr. Sorem asked if there are specific hours that Van Valkenburg is open to which Mr. Keprios replied it's open regular park hours, 5:00 am to 11:00 pm.

Mr. Fronek asked how many months would the off-leash dog portion be open to which Mr. Keprios replied he thinks they could guarantee that it would be open April through November 1st.

Mr. Fronek asked if there have ever been issues of children or adults getting bitten or their safety was in danger. Mr. Keprios stated he doesn't have the answer to that but could check with the animal control officer. He commented that he does know there have been attacks on small dogs by larger dogs.

Mr. Meyer asked if the soonest this could happen would be next spring to which Mr. Keprios replied that is correct.

Mr. O'Connell stated that he can empathize with these people because he has trained dogs and a lot of dogs do bark so he can understand the concerns of the people who have spoken to this point.

Mr. Pobuda stated that the ends of the hockey rink are fenced in and asked if the rest of the hockey rink would be fenced or would it remain the same. Mr. Keprios replied that they would have to add some fencing and a gate only at the entrance to the hockey rink so that the dogs would be totally enclosed. He indicated that there would be no other additional fencing on top of the boards because the current board height is adequate for the smaller dogs.

Mr. Sorem stated that he has been opposed to using a hockey rink as a permanent off-leash dog area from the beginning because he believes hockey rinks are used during the summer. He also doesn't think this would be a permanent solution for the small dog owners because they won't be able to use it during the winter months. However, as a low cost test site he thinks it's a great site because we would only be paying for the fencing at the opening. He indicated that Creek Valley may not be the greatest spot for a permanent site, but for a test facility he thinks it would be a good one. Mr. Sorem stated that he would be in favor of the site on a short-term test.

Mr. Peterson commented that he is one of the households that received the mailing and noted that he has two dogs and that there are plenty of dogs on his street and they all know each other and they all play together. He noted that he probably wouldn't use it but that he commends the staff for thinking about an issue and how they can

serve people in Edina. He thanked the people who came to the meeting and noted that he understands this may not be the best site.

Mr. Damman indicated that he has read all of the letters both for and against this issue, but noted that it would be a pilot project because we have been shown there is a need for it. Therefore, he would like to see it tried as a pilot project.

Mr. Meyer indicated that he is really not on either side of this issue but he does appreciate the job Mr. Keprios has done in promoting this and making sure people are aware of this issue that is being discussed. He noted that something they may want to consider is testing this during the summer in a number of parks that aren't actively used. He noted that he thinks part of the concern is that people will be coming from others parts of the city to this area specifically for the small dog off-leash park.

Mr. Presthus stated that he has an understanding of what everyone's concern is regarding this issue, but it's been pointed out there is a need for more dog parks in Edina because currently there is only one. He pointed out that if they have a test period of one year just to take a look at it that might not hurt. He noted that they can always make the decision that it might not be the spot for it, but at least they will get a better idea of whether or not a small dog park works and whether or not it can work within a hockey rink.

Mr. Hulbert indicated that the survey results do demonstrate there is a need for dog parks and if they have a test trial dog park he does think it will work and people will use it. However, when it comes to using a hockey rink that kids do use during the summer he does not agree. He noted that he thinks they need to be creative in trying to find a spot for a dog park that will get used and that's not going to take parkland away from kids. Mr. Hulbert commented that Weber Park is used as an off the record off leash dog park and asked why don't they look at putting in a chain fenced area there. He noted that maybe they could also look at the golf dome since that is closed from April through November maybe they could explore looking at the woods in that area.

Mr. Hulbert pointed out that if they are going to gate the opening of one of the hockey rinks putting in a gate is one of the most expensive parts of any fence project. A gate is a lot more expensive than 100 linear feet of chain link fence. He suggested that they try to look outside the box and try to find a couple of spots that aren't right by people's homes and aren't in an area of a park that our kids are using. Therefore, he would be against using the hockey rink at Creek Valley.

Mr. Fronek asked what the cost would be for a gate to which Mr. Keprios replied approximately \$1,200 to \$1,300. Mr. Hulbert asked if it didn't work in one area could it be reinstalled somewhere else to which Mr. Keprios replied yes, it could. Mr. Hulbert asked about Weber Park having an off-leash dog park. Mr. Keprios replied that is a project that they have been working on for over a decade. He explained how that piece of land is actually owned by the City of Minneapolis and that Edina and St. Louis Park have been working closely with the City of Minneapolis for many years trying to get them to sign an agreement to let them use their property on France Ave.

at 40 Street as an off-leash dog site because essentially that is what it is used for now. Mr. Keprios pointed out that he recently sent an e-mail to the City Manager of Minneapolis to find out if anything has changed and asked what their long range future plans are for that site at this time. He noted that he was informed that they are still looking at it and that they will get back to him shortly. He stated that he suspects they are going to make a decision within the next few months and commented how that would be an ideal site for both large and small dogs.

Mr. Fronek indicated that the Park and Recreation Department's mission is "We Create Community through People, Parks and Programs" and noted that he does have a dog and has been to dog parks. He stated that he believes this does create community because it's a chance for dog owners to get together outside. He stated that they want the parks to be used and they don't just want them to sit idle. However, on the other hand, he does empathize with the people who live closest to the park we have to remember that Creek Valley Park is a community play field and not a neighborhood park.

Mr. O'Connell indicated that maybe they should look at the area around the pond at Van Valkenburg for a small dog off-leash park. It would be ideal as far as isolation when the dogs bark. He stated that he thinks there would be enough room there and it would be far enough away from the fields. He commented that it could be sort of a joint large dog park and small dog park.

Randy Meyer MOVED TO TABLE. Dan Peterson SECONDED. **Mr. Fronek stated there is a motion on the floor to table the matter and he would assume the direction for Mr. Keprios is to check into something at Van Valkenburg and also wait to see if he hears anything from Minneapolis regarding Weber Park.**

In Favor of tabling the discussion for another meeting: Joseph Hulbert, Randy Meyer Ray O'Connell, Daniel Peterson, Ben Pobuda

Opposed to tabling: Jeff Sorem, Todd Fronek, Robb Presthus

Mike Damman abstained.

The motion to table passed.

- B. Welcome New Park Board Member - Mr. Fronek introduced and welcomed the newest Park Board member Ben Pobuda. Mr. Pobuda informed the Park Board that he lives at 4621 Casco Avenue and that he is a sophomore at Blake High School. He indicated that he wanted to be on the Park Board so that he could view the opinions of the public on many issues. The Park Board welcomed Mr. Pobuda.

III. UPDATES FROM STAFF

- A. October Park Board Meeting – Mr. Keprios informed the Park Board that he will be at the National Park and Recreation Association Congress in Baltimore in October and therefore proposed that they not have an October meeting. He noted that the

November Park Board meeting would include in the agenda the Capital Improvement Plan as well as fees and charges. He indicated that he will have all of management staff attend the meeting so that if need be they can defend their proposal for the 2009 Fees and Charges. Mr. Keprios indicated that they will also have a discussion about mailing notices to the Pamela Park neighborhood to address the long term park improvements that are planned. He added that they will also discuss having a public hearing or input meeting for the community either in December or January.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:55 PM